

Federal Media Shield Bill Would Protect Public's Right to Know and Confidential Sources

Indianapolis, IN—In a speech to the National Conference of Editorial Writers Convention today in Indianapolis, U.S. Congressman Mike Pence announced that he introduced H.R., 2932, the Free Flow of Information Act of 2011, this week. The legislation, also called the federal media shield bill, was authored by Pence six years ago and has twice passed the House of Representatives. The federal media shield bill would protect the public's right to know by protecting the rights of journalists and their use of confidential sources.

Pence's statement follows:

"Enshrined in the First Amendment of the Constitution are these words: 'Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press.'

"As a conservative who believes in limited government, I know the only check on government power in real time is a free and independent press. The Free Flow of Information Act is not about protecting reporters; it is about protecting the public's right to know.

"Compelling reporters to testify, and in particular, compelling them to reveal the identity of their confidential sources, is a detriment to the public interest. Without the promise of confidentiality, many important conduits of information about our government will be shut down. The dissemination of information by the media to the public on matters ranging from the operation of our government to events in our local communities is invaluable to the operation of our democracy. Without the free flow of information from sources to reporters, the public is ill-equipped to make informed decisions.

"The Free Flow of Information Act passed the House in October 2007 by a wide bipartisan majority of 398-21, and it passed the House again in March 2009 by voice vote. If provided the opportunity for a vote, I believe bipartisan majorities exist in the Congress sufficient to send this bill to the president for his signature.

"Thomas Jefferson warned that, 'Our liberty cannot be guarded but by the freedom of the press, nor that limited without danger of losing it.'

"This Congress would be wise to take those words to heart, and once and for all stitch this tear in the First Amendment freedom of the press."

###